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SUBJECT: (S//NF) UK FORCES CONTEMPLATE IRAQ DRAWDOWN TIMELINE

REF: BASRAH 67

CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Director, Regional Embassy Office
- Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

¶1. (S//NF) During a September 6 briefing, MND-SE commander MG Graham Binns asked his staff to contemplate what actions would be required to turn security for Basrah province to Iraqi control (PIC) in October. Binns suggested "exploiting" this period of calm to engage key leaders, by driving a wedge between national and external elements of Jaish al-Mahdi. He also said it was important to support requests by Basrah security chief GEN Mohan Hafith Fahad and police chief MG Jalil Khalaf Shueil for increased troops and equipment to show that Iraqis were improving security.

¶2. (S//NF) Binns also asked his staff to contemplate what the composition and disposition of UK forces should be after PIC. He said it was unlikely that they could be sure of their plans until after GEN Peter Petraeus' report to Congress in September and UK PM Gordon Brown's report to Parliament in October. Binns predicted that the UK's long-term involvement in Iraq would end by April/May 2008. To present their case for PIC in October to MNC-I commander LTG Ray Odierno, he said it was necessary to make assumptions now about what the situation in spring 2008 would look like.

¶3. (S//NF) Comment: As we have previously reported, Basrah province has effectively moved to PIC. (See ref.) While the British will push hard to officially turnover the province in the near-term, it is only a matter of time. The real question is what kind of posture they will take after PIC and how will the ISF respond.

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